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Disarmament Commission
332nd meeting
Wednesday, 3 April 2013, 10 a.m.
New York

Chair: Mr. Grima ..... (Malta)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

General debate (*continued*)

The Chair: I would urge those delegations that have not yet done so to inscribe their names on the list of speakers as soon as possible, as we plan to conclude the general exchange of views today at 4 p.m.

Ms. Dagher (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is my pleasure and honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the member States of the League of Arab States. The Arab Group supports the statement delivered at the Commission's 330th meeting by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you most warmly, Sir, on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission for 2013. We are confident that, with you experience and expertise, you will contribute to the success of this session. I also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

The Arab Group stresses that solutions agreed in the multilateral framework under the Charter of the United Nations provide the only sustainable way to address the issues of disarmament and international security.

The Arab Group calls on all Member States to fulfil their obligations individually and collectively through multilateral cooperation. We underscore our belief in the role of the United Nations in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation.

In that context, the Arab Group believes in the strength of the Disarmament Commission as the specialized deliberative body tasked with formulating recommendations on important issues in the field of disarmament. The Commission should be a source of new ideas and new initiatives. There are many simple ideas that could promote the unique character of the Commission, including the holding of informal meetings to test out new ideas.

For the Commission to achieve its objectives, Member States must show the necessary political will to make the most of this machinery and promote disarmament issues. That applies in particular when it comes to the items before the two Working Groups:, namely, "Recommendations for achieving the objective of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons" and "Practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons".

With regard to the recommendation to achieve disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, we should all recall that the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament placed the highest priority on nuclear disarmament. That has not been sufficiently reflected in the work of the multilateral disarmament machinery. Despite the faltering of the Conference on Disarmament because of a lack of political will, the United Nations in September this year will see an important new initiative be brought before the General Assembly by NAM, advocating for the holding of a high-level meeting of the General Assembly on 26 September to mobilize political will for nuclear disarmament worldwide.

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Given the role of the Commission as a deliberative body, we hope that Working Group I will generate new ideas concerning a phased programme for the elimination of nuclear weapons, which could then be transmitted to the high-level meeting for the consideration and support of Heads of State and Government.

We should grant just as much importance to the need to implement multilateral commitments in the field of nuclear disarmament. There is no higher priority in that regard than meeting the deadlines set out in the action plan adopted at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The first deadline — on the establishment of a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction — was not met. We emphasize that the failure to meet the obligations set out at the Review Conference undermines non-proliferation. Despite the readiness to participate on the part of all countries except one, the Middle East conference was not held by the agreed date.

The Arab League urges all parties to fulfil their commitments, as that is the only way for non-proliferation to regain its credibility and to ensure the success of the 2015 Review Conference. The Arab League observed developments in that regard, because this issue should have the position it deserves in the work of the Commission. We hope that the Commission's outcome will ensure the implementation of the obligations emanating from the 2010 Review Conference.

The issue of practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons is growing in importance in the light of the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty. It is important to address several issues, the first of which has to do with the surplus production and increasing stockpiles of conventional weapons in the hands of major exporters and producers of weapons. The international community should make efforts to put all production and stockpiles in producing countries under international control. Secondly, joint accountability is the only guarantee against abuse of the imbalance and the use of weapons. Thirdly, these threats against international peace and security must be addressed. In that respect, there is no graver threat to international peace and security, international humanitarian and human rights law and the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations itself than the crimes of aggression and foreign occupation whereby arsenals of weapons are used to dominate peoples and deprive them of their basic human rights.

The Commission plays a critical role in proposing confidence-building measures, which should go beyond the traditional meaning of that term. This agenda item is frequently used to support the narrow interpretation of that term, to serve the interests of a small group.

The Arab Group has set out its highest priorities among the issues to be discussed during the 2013 session of the Commission. It understands that the issues before us impose on us all an onerous task, but that should not limit our ambition but push us to exert greater efforts in our commitment to the principles of justice and non-selectivity, which are crucial for generating the necessary political will for the success of the Commission. The Arab Group underscores its commitment to applying those principles and to working with you, Sir, and the other members of the Commission in order to achieve progress on all issues related to disarmament.

Mr. Briens (France) (*spoke in French*): France associates itself with the statement delivered at the Commission's 330th meeting by the representative of Ireland on behalf of the European Union.

I should like to convey my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission at the present session. I would like to make several points regarding France's position.

We hope that this session will carry forward the constructive momentum within the international community during the past three years. The success of the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the entry into force of the Oslo Convention on Cluster Munitions and the New START agreement, and the progress made during various Nuclear Security Summits have shown that progress can be made on the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda when there is a constructive and pragmatic mindset.

That momentum also shows that efforts to achieve a safer world must be carried out in a comprehensive way and on all fronts — from nuclear, chemical, biological and conventional weapons, to ballistic proliferation and outer space.

Last year's session was productive and useful. We adopted an agenda for the current cycle and held meaningful discussions on disarmament issues. The Commission met our aspirations as a forum for reflection, discussion and the exchange of ideas regarding all areas of disarmament.

In the nuclear domain, our road map is the action plan adopted at the outcome of the 2010 Review Conference. The full implementation of that comprehensive and balanced action plan is the responsibility of all States parties, in particular in the light of the upcoming 2015 Review Conference, the success of which will be depend upon how much progress we have achieved in the implementation of the plan.

Nuclear-weapon States bear particular responsibility under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Following the first follow-up meeting to the NPT Review Conference of the five permanent members of the Security Council, organized by France last year, Russia will organize the next meeting on 19 and 20 April. That initiative shows the seriousness of nuclear-weapon States when it comes to implementing the action plan and their commitments under the NPT.

However, all States must contribute to disarmament by establishing the security environment required. That requires in particular the resolution of the two major proliferation crises that continue to threaten international peace and security. As we all know, North Korea is continuing its nuclear and ballistic programmes, in violation of Security Council resolutions. The third nuclear test in North Korea, just a few weeks ago, reminds us of the gravity of the situation.

Iran, too, continues its nuclear activities, in violation of the resolutions of the Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Board of Governors. Recent developments in the Iranian nuclear programme, in particular the installation of next-generation centrifuges, are of particular concern. The E3+3 of course remains committed to seeking a diplomatic solution. But we must note that the first meeting, held at Almaty, did not lead to a tangible outcome. We hope that, at the next meeting, which will be held at the end of this week, Iran will show genuine will to take specific steps in response to the concerns of the international community.

For France, the strengthening of the non-proliferation regime continues to be a priority, particularly through the strengthening of IAEA safeguards and the universalization of the additional protocol. In that regard, we welcome the entry into force of Iraq's and Viet Nam's Additional Protocols, at the end of last year. However, we must also strengthen the other aspects of the multilateral framework by bringing in all States that have not yet done so, particular those listed under annex 2, to join the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. In that respect, we commend the recent ratification of the Treaty by Chad.

We must also negotiate a fissile material cut-off treaty at the Conference on Disarmament. We hope that the Group of Governmental Experts that the First Committee decided to establish last year will facilitate the resumption of negotiations within the Conference on Disarmament on a treaty incorporating all of the stakeholders concerned. We would like to take this opportunity to call on all States concerned to establish without delay a moratorium on the production of fissile material for nuclear purposes, as France, the United States, the United Kingdom and Russia have already done.

Moreover, France supports the efforts made to implement the 1995 resolution on the Middle East. We regret that it was not possible to hold a conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East in 2012, as scheduled under the NPT action plan. We reaffirm our support for the efforts of the Facilitator, Mr. Laajava, to ensure that such conference will be held as soon as possible with all the stakeholders concerned. We call on all countries in the region to work constructively in that direction and to refrain from all actions that may move us away from our goal.

France continues to make efforts to promote general and complete disarmament. As I recalled, those efforts relate to every area and aim to universalize and strengthen existing multilateral instruments. The third Review Conference of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which will take place in one week in The Hague, is one of the major meetings of the year. The Convention has been an undeniable success in disarmament and non-proliferation. We must continue in our efforts to make that Convention universal, and we call upon all States that have not yet signed it to do so as soon as possible. The use of such inhumane weapons unfortunately remains topical, given the recent allegations of their use in Syria. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the decision of the

Secretary-General to launch an investigation into all allegations of the use of such weapons in Syria.

We also welcome the outcome of the seventh Review Conference of the Biological Weapons Convention and the efforts made towards its implementation. We commend the recent ratifications by Cameroon, the Marshall Islands and Nauru, and call on States that have not yet done so to join the Convention, which is a vital tool for our collective security.

Finally, France remains committed to strengthening efforts to combat the proliferation of ballistic missiles. That is a subject of great concern for the international community at a time when prohibited ballistic programmes are being developed, including in the guise of space programmes. France calls for the universalization of The Hague Code of Conduct, which strengthens trust and transparency in this area.

In conclusion, let me turn now to conventional disarmament. France welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly of the Arms Trade Treaty (resolution 67/234 B), by a vast majority. The text that we arrived at meets France's expectations. We express our warm congratulations to Conference President Ambassador Peter Woolcott and his predecessor, Ambassador Roberto García Moritán, for their tireless efforts to bring the negotiations to fruition.

We also welcome the positive results of the United Nations Conference to Review Progress Made in the Implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which took place in late summer 2012. The work accomplished there will allow us to improve and strengthen the implementation of that instrument and bring an end to the illicit trafficking and excessive stockpiling of such weapons, whose negative impact on regional crises and international instability we see on a daily basis.

All of those areas of work show the specific things we can achieve together, not in the distant future but in the months and years ahead of us, to build a safer world. We hope that the discussions throughout this session will address all of these challenges. You, sir, can count on the support of our delegation and on our participation in the debates in a constructive spirit.

Mr. Pham Vinh Quang (Viet Nam): At the outset, allow me, on behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chair of the Disarmament Commission at its 2013 substantive session. My delegation is strongly convinced that, under your able leadership, this year's session will achieve a successful outcome.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement made at the Commission's 330th meeting by the Ambassador of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Since the conclusion of the 2012 substantive session, we have witnessed encouraging developments in the field of disarmament. Those include the successful conclusion of the first session of the Preparatory Committee of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Second Review Conference on the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons and the adoption, last December, of a number of resolutions by the General Assembly on establishing working groups on nuclear disarmament and on a fissile material cut-off treaty. The two United Nations Conferences on the Arms Trade Treaty, although they failed to produce a consensual outcome, did lay significant groundwork for the Treaty, which the General Assembly adopted yesterday (resolution 67/234 B). The Treaty codifies positive elements, such as the recognition of the legitimate interests of States to acquire conventional arms, to exercise their right to self-defence and for peacekeeping operations, and to produce, export, import and transfer conventional arms, as well as the need to prevent and eradicate the illicit trade in conventional arms.

However, enormous challenges remain. The key priority of nuclear disarmament has not been given the attention it deserves, especially when compared to the other two pillars of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), namely, nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Nuclear weapons continue to hold a key position in the strategic doctrine of a number of countries. There are few signs that that will cease to be the case in the foreseeable future. Those limitations are coupled, furthermore, with the continued stalemate in the successive sessions of the Disarmament Commission over the past decade. As a result, the Commission has not been able to fulfil its overarching function as the sole deliberative forum on disarmament, entrusted with that task by the international community. In that regard, I would like to highlight a few key issues that, in our view, are critical for further success in the field of disarmament in general and in the work of the Commission in particular.

First, disarmament deliberations and negotiations within the United Nations framework should be conducted in good faith and in accordance with basic principles and practices in this area. Those guiding principles were consensually agreed at the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament and have been widely upheld ever since. They were the outcome of a long process of constructive engagement of countries following the Second World War and serve as a strong mechanism through which the legitimate interests of countries are taken into account and adequately addressed. While we welcome new initiatives to overcome current stalemate in the disarmament bodies, we should bear in mind that the central role of the Disarmament Commission, the Conference on Disarmament and other relevant United Nations bodies, as well as their established rules of procedures, are critical to our success.

Secondly, while devoting adequate attention and resources to a number of issues of great urgency in the field of disarmament, we should accord the highest priority to nuclear disarmament, which is the ultimate goal of humankind. In that connection, we urge the balanced implementation of the 64-point plan adopted at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, of which the earliest possible convening of a conference on the establishment of a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction is crucial. We also call for the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without any delay, and urge the nuclear-weapon States to take a leading role in the ratification of the Treaty. Pending its entry into force, all States should maintain a moratorium on nuclear testing and other nuclear explosions.

We also support and take part in international efforts aimed at nuclear non-proliferation, and abide by internationally agreed technical standards for the promotion of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Thirdly, deliberations on measures in the field of conventional arms should take into account the legitimate right to self-defence of States, and, thus, the right to import, maintain and produce conventional arms for legitimate defence and security needs. As a country that has gone through and greatly suffered from conflicts and the inhumane use of weapons, Viet Nam understands first-hand the great need for the maintenance of international and regional peace and security, which, in turn, ultimately rests on the establishment of environments conducive to confidence-building, the peaceful resolution of disputes and the principle of non-use of force in international relations. All States should redouble efforts aimed at that goal for future concrete results in the field of disarmament.

In conclusion, let me reiterate our strong support to you, Mr. Chair, as well as our firm commitment to a successful outcome of this important session.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.